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ABSTRACT

Although the United States has seen a record influx of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children into the foster care system in the past decade, there has not been an accompanying shift in policy or practice to attend to the developmental issues these younger children bring to child welfare. This textbook addresses the spectrum of child welfare services for young children and applies a guiding developmental framework to discussions on poverty, child maltreatment, foster care, reunification, unstable placements, kinship care, and group care. The book begins with an overview of child development theory, examines child abuse reporting patterns, and discusses placement in foster care, reunification, and adoption. The book also looks at public child welfare practice, featuring examples of the children and families served by this system. An analysis of the differences between the foster care experiences of very young children and those of older children is offered, emphasizing the way the child welfare system deals with infants. The book also discusses the interrelationship of child welfare practice, child development outcomes, and public policy. Finally, the book offers a fundamental framework for decision making in child welfare when young children are involved, and recommends specific changes in policy and practice aimed at moving the system toward greater developmental sensitivity. The book's appendix details the methods used for new findings presented in the book, based largely on data from the California Children's Services Archive. (Contains approximately 310 references.) (KB)

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